

FOREWORD

We are pleased to present the first of the two volumes of the ECIS7 proceedings.

European Conferences of Iranian Studies (ECIS) are organized every four years under the auspices of the *Societas Iranologica Europaea* (SIE), a learned international society, which was founded in 1983, with the aim of promoting, developing and supporting Ancient, Middle and Modern Iranian Studies in all subject areas of these fields, including philology, linguistics, literature, history, religions, art, archaeology, philosophy, ethnology, geography, human sciences and jurisprudence.

Following the previous SIE conferences, which were held in Turin (1987), Bamberg (1991), Cambridge (1995), Paris (1999), Ravenna (2003), and Vienna (2007), the seventh conference in 2011 was organized by the Iranian Studies Department of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, and was hosted in the historical buildings of the oldest Polish University (established in 1364).

The welcome addresses were delivered by professors: Anna Krasnowolska, Head of the Iranian Studies Department at the Jagiellonian University, Andrzej Mania, Vice-Rector for Educational Affairs, Marcela Świątkowska, Dean of the Philology Faculty, and Carlo Cereti, President of the *Societas Iranologica Europaea*. Greetings from Prof. Peter Chełkowski of the New York University (a former student of the Jagiellonian) were read in his absence to the participants of the congress, and Prof. Zdzisław Żygulski Jun. of the Princes' Czartoryski Museum in Cracow gave the opening lecture on works of Oriental art in Polish art collections.

Over 300 participants, not only from Europe, but also from Asia, North America and Australia (30 countries altogether) took part in the Conference which can therefore be considered representative, at least to some degree, of the current trends prevailing in the field of Iranian studies. The topics of papers submitted to previous SIE conferences point to the changing focus of Iranian studies in Europe and elsewhere. It would be fascinating to summarize

these changes, perhaps on the occasion of the 10th conference in 2023. While the traditional disciplines (philology, history and religions of the pre-Islamic and classical Islamic periods) are still flourishing and developing, a systematically growing interest in social, anthropological and cultural issues, both historical and contemporary, can be seen. Interestingly, the fields of research especially strongly represented at the 2011 conference in Cracow appeared to be archaeology (dominated by reports from an Iraqi-Italian mission in Kurdistan), numismatics, and Kurdish cultural studies. Regrettably, Afghan studies were poorly represented that time. The significant presence (over 80 people) of mainly young scholars from Iranian universities (including the provincial ones) shows a growing interest and the determination of a new generation of Iranian academics in contributing to the international discussion on their own history and culture.

Following the pattern adopted by the preceding, 6th European Conference held in Vienna, the organizers decided to arrange the sessions thematically rather than chronologically. The lectures proceeded in seven thematic blocks: religious studies, linguistics, art and archaeology, cultural studies, literature, history and numismatics. Additionally, the participants' own specialized panels ('Sources of Safavid Studies', 'Kurdish Studies', 'The Iraqi-Italian Project in Iraqi Kurdistan', 'Iranian film', 'Religion and its Paradoxical Influence on Sacred and Profane Forms of Art since the 1980s', 'Modernization Process in Iran: the Ethnographic View') were run in parallel to the thematic sessions.

For publication purposes, the editors have decided on a traditional chronological division of the papers into two volumes: the Pre-Islamic period and the Classical and Modern periods. The present volume includes 22 articles concerning the pre-Islamic period. Yet, within the volume, the texts fall into five thematic categories: linguistic, literature, religion, history and archaeology. Due to the interdisciplinary character of most of them, however, their attribution to one of those groups was, in many cases, a matter of compromise. It was impossible to publish all the interesting papers presented at the conference, but the editors did their best to include in the volume as many works as possible, that is those contributions which, in their own and the reviewers' opinion, bring new ideas and approaches to Iranian studies, whilst adhering to required methodological and editorial standards.

The editors hope to have succeeded in presenting, through their choice, a broad scope of interests and the vitality of Iranian studies in the 21st century; a continuation and perfecting of traditional research areas, as well as a development of new fields of interest, and, at the same time, a broadening range of methodologies and approaches.

The Iranian world (perceived not only as Iran, but the whole Persian-speaking and culturally “Persianate” area) is nowadays a sensitive region of the Middle East, and the focus of public opinion is on its political developments. But it should not be forgotten, that this is also a distinct cultural area with an extremely rich and complex history, with a mosaic of ethnic and religious groups, with ancient languages and dialects, with wonderful and sophisticated literatures, both written and oral, with not only fascinating ancient beliefs and traditions, but also amazing dynamics of modern change combined with an uninterrupted continuation. As the articles collected in our two conference volumes are intended to show, the Iranian past and present still reveal unknown, surprising aspects, opening up prospects for new research. Without knowledge of its cultural background with all its richness and complexity, the understanding of the contemporary Iranian world would not be possible.

The organizers of the Conference wish to express their gratitude to all those, who made its accomplishment possible. We thank Prof. Jacek Majchrowski, the Mayor of the City of Cracow, for his honorary patronage of the Conference, the National Museum of Cracow and Dr. Barbara Mękarska for holding a small exhibition of the treasures of Persian art in the Cracovian collection of the National Museum, the Princes’ Czartoryski Library for exhibiting Persian manuscripts from the Czartoryski Museum during the conference, and the Italian academic team from the University of Bologna for organizing a photography exhibition documenting their field research conducted in the Yaqnob Valley in Tajikistan. We would also like to express our special thanks to Karolina Zięba from Galeria Persja, Pauza Cinema, Psalmodya Choir and Neyriz music group for their contributions to the cultural programme of the Congress, and our students for their hard work during it.

The editors are greatly obliged to Prof. Almut Hintze, President of the Societas Iranologica Europaea, for her personal commitment in preparing the volume, and the entire Board of the SIE, as well as the Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum for the financial support of the present publication. And last but not least, we thank all the authors who submitted their papers and all the reviewers, who devoted their time for reading them.

Anna Krasnowolska and Renata Rusek-Kowalska, editors
Cracow, April 2015